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# French *ne* really is Neg°\*

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## Introduction

X-bar theory distinguishes between two fundamentally different types of syntactic object, namely, heads and phrases. This distinction has usefully been applied to markers of sentential negation, both cross-linguistically and language-internally (Zanuttini 1990; Rowlett 2000a: 11-12); X° negative markers (e.g. Spanish *no*) are distinguished from XP negative markers (e.g., French *pas*). Amongst other things, the distinction between X° and XP negative markers provides the principled foundation for an interesting descriptive generalisation, namely, that some negative markers (heads) appear in verbal/clausal contexts only, while other negative markers (phrases) are subject to no such distributional restriction.

However, there are three constructions in French in which the X° negative marker *ne* occurs in an apparently non-verbal context, hence flouting this generalisation. There are two logically possible ways to deal with this state of affairs: either the generalisation is abandoned; or alternatively, the three 'problematic' constructions are analysed in such a way as not to constitute a counterexample. My claim here is that while the problems raised by the first context take us beyond the syntax of negative markers, the non-verbal nature of the other two constructions in which *ne* appears is in fact illusory, since they can be analysed as containing a phonologically null modal verb. On this analysis, the appearance of *ne* isn't an exception to the generalisation, which can therefore be maintained.

The article is organised as follows. In section 1, I present the distinction between Type 1 (X°) and Type 2 (XP) negative markers, and account for the generalisation

that Type 1, but not Type 2, negative markers are restricted to verbal/clausal contexts. In section 2, I present the three 'problematic' contexts in French, in which the Type 1 negative marker *ne* appears in a non-verbal context, and suggest that the first need not be dealt with here. Before offering an analysis of the second and third apparent counterexamples, I discuss, in section 3, the phenomenon of NEG-raising in the context of modals. In section 4, then, I exploit the parallels between the data in section 3 and the problematic constructions from section 2, arguing that the apparent counterexamples disappear if they are assumed to contain a non-overt modal. The paper is summarised in section 5.

## 1. Two types of negative marker

Since Pollock's seminal 1989 article, and further work on sentential negation in Romance by Zanuttini (1990, 1997), markers of sentential negation have commonly been divided into two types. First, there are Type 1 negative markers, like Spanish and Catalan *no*, Italian and Galician *non*, French, Serbo-Croat and Breton *ne*, Portuguese *não*, Romanian *nu*, Berber *ur*, Burmese *mə* and West Flemish *en*. These negative markers have a number of distinctive morphosyntactic properties. They are typically preverbal, proclitic on the first verb in the clause, and often phonetically weak (Jespersen's 1924: 333 negative elements 'comparatively small in phonetic bulk'). Further, they can move with the finite verb in inversion contexts, as in (1):

- (1) Pourquoi NE LUI EN AVAIS-tu pas parlé avant? (French)  
       why     *ne* to:him of:it had   you not spoken before  
       'Why hadn't you talked to him about it beforehand?'

Second, there are Type 2 negative markers, like German *nicht*, English *not*, Piedmontese *nen*, Milanese *no* and *minga*, Sursilvan *buca*, Dutch *niet* and French, Occitan, Catalan and Valdotain *pa/pas*. Type 2 negative markers are typically independent words, not subject to phonetic weakening (Jespersen's 'fuller negatives'). They typically follow at least the finite verb, and sometimes also participles (e.g., Milanese *no*, French *jamais*, in marked cases), and they do not move with the finite verb in inversion contexts, as in (2).

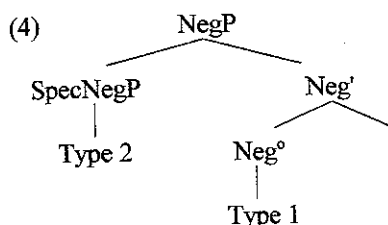
- (2) Warum HATTEST du NICHT früher mit ihm darüber gesprochen?  
 why had you not earlier with him about:it spoken  
 'Why hadn't you talked to him about it beforehand?' (German)

Type 1 and Type 2 negative markers can co-occur, as in (3):

- (3) a. Je N' ai PAS parlé de toi. (French)  
 I NEG have NEG spoken of you  
 'I didn't talk about you.'
- b. U N li sent NENT. (Cairese)  
 he NEG him hear NEG  
 'He can't hear him.'
- c. Igl bab NA lavoura BETG. (Surmeiran)  
 the father NEG works NEG  
 'The father doesn't work.'
- d. Po N' mu NIN tromper. (Walloon)  
 for NEG me NEG be-mistaken  
 '... so that I don't make a mistake.' (a-d: Zanuttini 1997)

The distinctive morphosyntactic properties of Type 1 and Type 2 negative markers

sketched above point to a structural analysis as the head and specifier, respectively, of a functional projection encoding clausal polarity, namely, NegP (Pollock 1989).



Type 1 negative markers are functional heads generated in Neg°, and, following head-to-head movement, form part of a morphologically complex head with the finite verb in AgrS° (see, e.g., Acquaviva 1994). This explains why Type 1 negative markers are restricted to verbal/clausal contexts; indeed, some Type 1 negative markers occur with *finite* verbs only. The analysis of Type 1 negative markers as Neg° also accounts for the fact that no more than one Type 1 negative marker may appear in a given clause; there is, after all, only one AgrS°/Neg° per clause.

Type 2 negative markers are adverbial XPs (often derived diachronically from nominals; Schwegler 1988) which are either: (a) generated directly in SpecNegP (e.g., Pollock 1989 for French *pas*, Haegeman 1995 for West Flemish *nie*); (b) raised in overt syntax into SpecNegP (e.g., Rowlett 1993, 1996, 1998a for French *pas*); or (c) located lower in clause structure, and bound by a non-overt operator in SpecNegP (operator–variable chains; Haegeman 1995; Rowlett 1997, 1998b). As adverbials, Type 2 negative markers are morphosyntactically independent and – reconstruction of ellipsis aside (Giannakidou 2000: 100) – do not rely on NegP being projected, hence their distributional flexibility. For example, they appear in contexts of constituent negation, such as (5a), which is to be contrasted with the context of sentential negation in (5b).

- (5) a. Il est parti, mais pas sans dire au revoir.  
           he is left but NEG without say goodbye  
           ‘He left, but not without saying goodbye.’  
       b. Il n’ est pas parti sans dire au revoir.  
           he NEG is NEG left without say goodbye  
           ‘He didn’t leave without saying goodbye.’

In summary, then, the distinctive morphosyntactic properties of Type 1 and Type 2 negative markers, including the fact that Type 1 markers are restricted to verbal/clausal contexts, derive directly from the analysis of the former as the underlying head of NegP and of the latter as a phrasal constituent associated with SpecNegP.

## 2. The problems

While French *ne* is generally a well-behaved Type 1 negative marker (Grevisse 1986: 1490 §982 notes that ‘il s’appuie nécessairement sur le verbe’), there are three apparently non-verbal constructions in French in which *ne*, a Type 1 negative marker, appears. These are illustrated in sections 2.1–2.3. (The second and third are discussed, but analysed differently, in Rowlett 1996: 32–36 and Rowlett 1998a: 20–25.)

### 2.1. Problem 1: (*ne*) *voilà(-t-il) pas*

The data in this section relate to the presentative form *voilà* in (6)–(7).





b. VOILÀ-T-IL PAS une instructive histoire?

VOILÀ he NEG an instructive story

'Wasn't that an instructive story?' (Grevisse 1986: 1587 §1047)

(10) a. Est-ce que NE LE VOILÀ PAS parti?

is it that NEG it VOILÀ NEG left

'Hasn't he left?' (Grevisse 1986: 642 §387)

b. Est-ce que NE VOILÀ PAS de la pourpre?

is it that NEG VOILÀ NEG of the purple

'Isn't that purple?' (Grevisse 1986: 1587 §1047)

c. NE VOILÀ PAS encore de son style?

NEG VOILÀ NEG again of his style

'Isn't that more of his style?' (Molière, *Les Femmes savantes*)

d. NE VOILÀ-T-IL PAS une entité qu' ils croyaient unique?

NEG VOILÀ he NEG an entity which they thought unique

'Isn't this an entity that they thought was unique?'

(J Bonells, *L'Espagne*, Flammarion, 1997)

e. ... NE VOILÀ-T-IL PAS qu' il se fâche!

NEG VOILÀ he NEG that he gets-angry

'... look at him get angry.' (Grevisse 1986: 642 §387)

Given the extent of the 'verbal' behaviour of *voilà*, it makes sense to assume that, in the relevant respects, this form really is a verb. Consequently, and while not wishing to downplay in any way the questions raised by the peculiar residual verbal properties of *voilà* outlined here, its specific compatibility with *ne* is just one detail of a broader picture, and I put the problem to one side.

## 2.2 Problem 2: *pour (ne) pas que* + subjunctive S

The second problematic context (Daoust-Blais & Kemp 1979) is illustrated in the examples in (11) and (12). Here, the Type 1 negative marker *ne* appears, optionally, together, for example, with *pas*, between the preposition *pour* and the finite declarative complementiser *que*, forming a complex complementiser/conjunction equivalent in meaning to (the rather archaic) *lest* 'for fear that', 'in order that . . . not':

- (11) a. Je garde contact avec eux POUR NE PAS QU' ils m' oublient.

I keep contact with them for NEG not that they me forget  
 'I keep in contact with them so that they don't forget me.'

- b. Habillez-vous bien, POUR NE PAS QUE vous preniez froid.

dress you well for NEG NEG that you take cold  
 'Wrap up so you don't catch cold.'

- (12) a. On éclaire . . . en dessous POUR NE PAS QU' il y ait de distorsion.

one lights in below for NEG NEG that it there have of distortion  
 'We light from below to avoid distortion.'

- b. Il avait pleuré . . . sous sa capote POUR NE PAS QUE les autres l'

he had cried under his hood for NEG NEG that the others him  
 entendent.  
 hear

'He had cried under his hood so that the others wouldn't hear him.'

- c. Je l' ai pris POUR NE PAS QU' Armand le voie.

I it have taken for NEG NEG that Armand it see  
 'I took it so that Armand wouldn't see it.'

d. POUR NE PAS QUE tu viennes . . .

for NEG NEG that you come

'So that you won't come . . . ' (Cinque 1999: 176, fn. 47)

e. Il suffisait d' un rien POUR NE PAS QUE je sois là.

if sufficed of a nothing for NEG NEG that I be there

'It wouldn't have taken anything for me not to be there.'

f. Ils ont pris toutes les mesures POUR NE PAS QUE les bactéries

they have taken all the measures for NEG NEG that the bacteria

se développent.

self develop

'They did all they could to prevent bacteria from spreading.'

(e, f. Blanche-Benveniste 1997: 41, 54)

The problematic nature of this construction can be seen from the positive equivalent of *pour (ne) pas que*, illustrated in (13):

(13) a. Ecris vite ta lettre POUR QU'elle parte ce soir.

write quickly your letter for that it leaves this evening

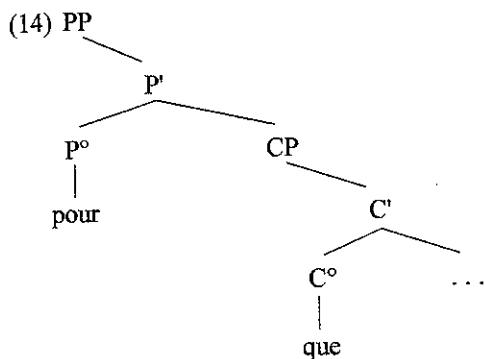
'Get on and write your letter in order to catch the last post.'

b. Il a mis une barrière POUR QUE les enfants ne sortent pas.

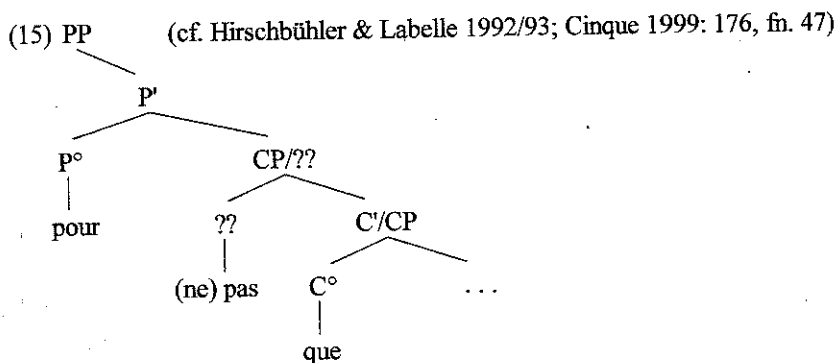
he has put a barrier for that the children NEG leave NEG

'He's put a barrier up to stop the children from getting out.'

Assuming that *pour* is indeed a preposition, and *que*, a complementiser introducing a subjunctive clause (Tellier 1997: 115), the null hypothesis regarding the structure of *pour que* in (13) must be (14):



Thus, the problem with *pour (ne) pas que* in (11) and (12) amounts to positioning *(ne) pas* within the structure in (14).



If the CP headed by *que* is the complement of *pour*, as in the structure for *pour que* in (14), it is far from clear what positions might be occupied by *pas* and, more particularly, given its status as a Type 1 negative marker, *ne*.

The *pour (ne) pas que* construction has not gone unnoticed in the literature. The apparent position of *(ne) pas* at the CP level is generally recognised as odd. Zanuttini (1997: 201, fn. 7) suggests that French *ne* is unique within its class of negative marker in appearing in the CP domain. Rickard's (1989: 147) view is that

the construction is "incorrect" (sic), but common in "uneducated speech". Gallagher (1993: 121), in his review of Rickard (1989), doubts whether the problem is in fact real, since, in his view, *ne* is always omitted in this construction. In sharp contrast, Muller (1991: 125/149) says that this familiar construction is a frequently occurring exception to the generalisation that *ne* is restricted to verbal contexts. As for more traditional authorities, the Le Petit Robert dictionary (1984) recognises the existence of both *pour ne pas que* (familiar) and *pour pas que* (popular). Grevisse (1986: 1489 §980) comments that '[l]a construction *pour ne pas que* . . . tend à passer de la langue populaire dans la langue littéraire, mais elle reste suspecte d'incorrection. . . . *Pour pas que* appartient à la langue populaire.' Finally, Bénac (1976: 239) outlaws both versions of the construction in favour of the alternative in which the negative markers appear within the embedded clause, as in (16) (cf. also (13b)).

(16) Je garde contact avec eux POUR QU' ils NE m' oublient PAS.

I keep contact with them for that they NEG me forget NEG

'I keep in contact with them so that they don't forget me.'

As we shall see, Bénac's recommended alternative construction is not entirely unrelated to the proposed analysis of the *pour (ne) pas que* construction given in section 4.

### 2.3 Problem 3: double *ne* in non-finite S

The final problematic context in which *ne* appears is illustrated in (17) and (18). Here, the problem is not so much that *ne* appears in a non-verbal context, but rather that two instances of *ne* appear in what appears to be a single clausal context

(Muller 1991: 325), and hence that one of them must be homeless.

(17) Je t' ordonne de [NE plus jamais NE rien faire].

I you order of NEG no:longer not:ever NEG nothing do

'I order you never again to do nothing.'

(= 'I order you always to do something in future.')

(18) - Il serait criminel de ne pas partir.

it would:be criminal of NEG NEG leave

'It would be a crime not to leave.'

- Au contraire, il serait criminel de [NE pas NE pas partir].

to:the contrary it would:be criminal of NEG NEG NEG NEG leave

'On the contrary, it would be a crime not to not leave.'

(= 'On the contrary, it would be a crime not to stay.')

These data are problematic if the bracketed constituents are monoclausal, since a single clause has a single split-IP domain and, therefore, just one NegP and one AgrSP projection. In other words, there is no room for two instances of *ne*.

Note that, unusually, *ne*-deletion is impossible here (if meaning is to be maintained). The meaning of (17) alters if the second *ne* is absent:

(19) Je t' ordonne de [NE plus jamais rien faire].

I you order of NEG no:longer not:ever nothing do

'I order you not to do anything ever again.'

(= the opposite of (17))

The bracketed constituent in (19) is a single clause, with one instance of negation;

the double negation interpretation of the bracketed constituent in (17) suggests that there are two clauses there. The same is true of (20).

(20) Je te conseille de [NE plus jamais NE pas être à l'heure].

I you advise of NEG no:longer not:ever NEG NEG be at the hour

'I advise you never again to be late.'

Note also that, in (20), the Type 2 negative marker *pas* co-occurs with the negative adverbials *plus* and *jamais*, without any resulting oddness. It is well known that *pas* characteristically does *not* co-occur with elements like *jamais* and *rien* within the same clause (Rowlett 1998a: chs 4, 5). More strikingly still, note the co-occurrence of two instances of *pas* in (18). The grammaticality of (20) suggests, therefore, that the problematic constructions seen in this section are biclausal. This idea is explored in section 4, where I propose an analysis of the problematic occurrences of *ne* in the constructions discussed in both this and the previous section. Before that, I prepare the ground for my proposal by considering the phenomenon of NEG-raising in the context of modal verbs.

### 3. NEG-raising and modals

As is well known, sentences like (21) are ambiguous between the preferred (narrow scope) reading in (22b) and the pragmatically less acceptable (wide scope) reading in (22a) (Prince 1976: 404).

(21) Max doesn't believe that Anne will leave.



- (22) a. It is not the case that Max believes that Anne will leave.  
 b. Max believes that Anne won't leave.

The phenomenon allowing the reading in (22b), that is, the positive assertion of a negative belief, is known as NEG-raising (Fillmore 1963); the matrix verb *believe* in (21) allows the negative marker to raise out of the embedded clause (where it logically belongs) and to migrate into the matrix clause. NEG-raising is not unique to English; Jespersen (1917: 53, quoted in Horn 1978: 129) talks of a 'strong tendency in many languages to attract to the main verb a negative which should logically belong to the dependent nexus'. NEG-raising is possible in French, for example, and the direct translation of (21) is ambiguous in exactly the same way as the English example:

- (23) Max ne croit pas qu'Anne partira.

Indeed, in some contexts, NEG-raising is not only possible, but actually compulsory, e.g., in the case of the French impersonal construction *il faut que* (Rowlett 1994, contra Muller 1991); (24) can only be interpreted with NEG-raising, as in (25b), rather than (25a).

- (24) Il ne faut pas que tu l' appelles.  
 it NEG is-necessary NEG that you him call

- (25) a. 'It is not the case that it is necessary that you call him.'  
 b. 'It is the case that it is necessary that you not call him.'

However, not all verbs allow NEG-raising; bridge verbs in French and English are a case in point:

- (26) a. Max didn't say that Anne will leave.  
 b. Max n'a pas dit qu' Anne partira.  
 c. = 'It is not the case that Max said that Anne will leave.'  
 d. ≠ 'It is the case that Max said that Anne won't leave.'

Interestingly, modals behave quite quirkily in this respect. In English, while (27a, b) are essentially synonymous, (28a, b) are not, showing that *must* and *have to* behave differently with respect to NEG-raising. Further, the German modal *müssen* in (29) follows the pattern of *have to* in (28a), rather than the etymologically related *must* in (28b).

- (27) a. You have to leave.                      b. You must leave.  
 (28) a. You don't have to leave.            b. You mustn't leave.

- (29) Du mußt nicht gehen.  
       you must not go  
       'You don't have to go.'

In French, various modals trigger NEG-raising. In (30), the negative adverbials *plus* and *jamais* (Rowlett 1996: ch. 4, 1998a: ch. 4) have raised out of the embedded clauses into the matrix clauses.

- (30) a. Il ne faut plus que tu sois fâché contre moi.  
 it NEG is-necessary no:longer that you be angry against me  
 'You mustn't be angry with me any more.'  
 (= 'It is necessary that you no longer be angry with me.')
- b. Il ne faut jamais que tu m' appelles.  
 it NEG be-necessary not:ever that you me call  
 'You mustn't ever call me.'  
 (= 'It is necessary that you not call me ever.')

In summary, modals vary with respect to whether NEG-raising is impossible, possible or compulsory. In section 4, I suggest that the key to the explanation of the data in sections 2.2 and 2.3 lies in assuming that the Type 1 negative marker *ne* appears in a clause containing a non-overt modal.

#### 4. The proposal

To solve the problem posed by the data in sections 2.2 and 2.3 above, I claim that the contexts in (11), (12), (17) and (18), in which the Type 1 negative marker *ne* appears, in fact contain a non-overt infinitival modal. Since the presence of the modal means that these contexts are verbal, they no longer represent counterexamples to the generalisation that Type 1 negative markers like *ne* are restricted to verbal/clausal contexts.

With respect to the *pour (ne) pas que* construction in section 2.2, I claim, first, that, in semantic terms, it is not the preposition *pour* that expresses the 'purposive' force of the construction. That *pour* does not itself introduce a purpose clause is shown by examples such as (31):

- (31) Il est arrivé à cinq heures, pour repartir dix minutes après.  
 he is arrived at five hours POUR leave-again ten minutes after  
 'He arrived at five o'clock, only to leave again ten minutes later.'  
 ≠ 'He arrived at five o'clock *in order to* leave again ten minutes later'.

Instead, I attribute the purposive interpretation of the adverbial clauses in (11)–(13) and (16) to the non-overt modal; the structure of (13) above is therefore as in (32):

- (32) a. . . . [<sub>PP</sub> pour [<sub>IP</sub> MODAL [<sub>CP</sub> qu'elle parte ce soir]]].  
 b. . . . [<sub>PP</sub> pour [<sub>IP</sub> MODAL [<sub>CP</sub> que les enfants ne sortent pas]]].

In (13b) and (16), sentential negation remains in situ in the embedded clause. In (11) and (12), in contrast, NEG-raising allows sentential negation to 'migrate' from the embedded clause to the higher clause containing MODAL. The (very schematic) underlying structure of the examples in (11) is shown in (33):

- (33) a. . . . pour [<sub>IP</sub> MODAL [<sub>CP</sub> que [<sub>IP</sub> ils pas m'oublier]]].  
 b. . . . pour [<sub>IP</sub> MODAL [<sub>CP</sub> que [<sub>IP</sub> vous pas prendre froid]]].

Following NEG-raising, and assuming that the non-overt infinitival modal does not undergo verb raising (see Rowlett 1998a: 17–18 for relevant discussion in the context of overt infinitival modals), the superficial structure of (33) is as in (34):

- (34) a. . . . pour [<sub>IP</sub> ne pas<sub>i</sub> MODAL [<sub>CP</sub> qu'ils m'oublient t<sub>i</sub>]].  
 b. . . . pour [<sub>IP</sub> ne pas<sub>i</sub> MODAL [<sub>CP</sub> que vous preniez froid t<sub>i</sub>]].

Note also that what has been termed here the *pour (ne) pas que* construction is

not actually restricted to (*ne*) *pas*, as shown by the examples in (35), where NEG-raising targets the negative adverbials *plus* and/or *jamais*.

- (35) a. Il a téléphoné POUR (NE) PLUS QUE je le boude.  
 he has called for NEG no:longer that I him sulk  
 'He called so that I would no longer be in a bad mood with him.'
- b. Elle me soutient POUR (NE) JAMAIS QUE j'aie des ennuis financiers.  
 she me supports for NEG not:ever that I have some problems financial  
 'She supports me so that I never have financial problems.'
- c. Je t' ai puni POUR (NE) PLUS JAMAIS QUE tu fasses cela.  
 I you have punished for NEG no:longer not:ever that you do that  
 'I punished you so that you don't do it again.'

The possibility that negative adverbials other than *pas* should be able to undergo NEG-raising here is expected, since the same is possible in the more familiar NEG-raising contexts we saw in (30).

Turning now to the data in section 2.3, I claim that, here too, the 'problem' of a homeless *ne* can be solved by assuming that the bracketed constituents in (17), (18) and (20), for example, are in fact biclausal, and that the higher clause contains a non-overt modal. The relevant features of the underlying and surface structure, respectively, of (17) are therefore as in (36a, b) (assuming that *ne* is not licensed in the base).

- (36) a. . . . de [plus jamais MODAL [faire rien]].  
 b. . . . de [ne plus jamais MODAL [ne rien faire]].

A couple of comments are in order here. Note, first, that, as mentioned above, a biclausal analysis accounts for the double negation interpretation of these

examples; contrast, for example, the biclausal (17) with the monoclausal (19), whose structure is set out in (37).

(37) . . . de [MODAL [ne plus jamais rien faire]].

However, the semantic argument for a modal in the context of the *pour (ne) pas que* construction, namely, the expression of purpose, is not as obviously applicable in the current context. Given that the phenomenon under consideration is possible across the board in infinitival contexts, as shown in (38), then, in order to maintain the proposed analysis, it would be necessary to claim that all infinitival contexts are introduced by a non-overt modal verb. It seems to me that this is a potential weakness of the proposed analysis, and deserves further attention.

(38) a. Je t' ai dit de ne plus jamais ne rien faire.

I you have said of NEG no:longer not:ever NEG nothing do  
'I told you not ever to do nothing again.'

b. Il se résout à ne plus jamais ne rien faire.

he self resolves to NEG no:longer not:ever NEG nothing do  
'He has resolved never again to do nothing.'

c. Il faut ne plus jamais ne rien faire.

it is-necessary NEG no:longer not:ever NEG nothing do  
'You must never again do nothing.'

d. Ne jamais ne pas être à l' heure? Impossible!

NEG not:ever NEG NEG be at the hour impossible  
'Not ever not be on time? Impossible!'

## 5 Summary

In section 1, I distinguished Type 1 negative markers (syntactic heads generated under Neg<sup>o</sup>) from Type 2 negative markers (syntactic XPs associated with SpecNegP), and introduced the generalisation that, as a direct consequence of their morphosyntactic properties, Type 1 negative markers are restricted to verbal/clausal contexts. In section 2, I discussed a number of apparent counterexamples to this generalisation from French. The 'problematic' context in section 2.1 was attributed to some residual verbal property of *voilà*, which was deemed to be responsible for the appearance not only of *ne*, but also of object clitics, the inverted subject clitic *-t-il* and the verbal prefix *re-*. As for the contexts in sections 2.2 and 2.3, these were reanalysed in parallel fashion to the clauses exemplified in section 3 containing modal verbs and allowing NEG-raising. To be precise, the problematic *pour (ne) pas que* construction in section 2.2 was deemed to contain a non-overt infinitival modal verb which had (optionally) triggered NEG-raising from its complement clause. The examples in section 2.3, finally, were similarly dealt with using a non-overt modal. The value of the proposed analyses is that the distinction in section 1 between Types 1 and 2 negative markers can be maintained, as can the generalisation that Type 1 negative markers are restricted to verbal/clausal contexts.

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